

GeoData Alliance Organizational Initiative

Summary of Meetings

1999 National GeoData Forum Washington, DC June 7-9, 1999

Dee Hock delivered an inspirational keynote to over 400 GeoData Forum participants on Monday, June 7. He outlined his innovative ideas about chaordic systems in nature and society, challenging the audience to think differently about organizations, and responded to probing questions in a lively question-and-answer session. The dialogue continued on Tuesday as Dee and over 50 forum participants in the GeoData Organizational Issues thread considered how best to share leadership and responsibility in building the National Spatial Data Infrastructure. On Wednesday morning in the Forum wrap-up session, participants endorsed the bold step to “pursue a chaordic organization”.

Geodata Organizational Initiative Denver, Colorado October 13-15, 1999

The Federal Geographic Data Committee invited a broad cross-section of Federal, State, local, tribal and regional government representatives, industry leaders, and members of nonprofit organizations and academia to identify governance needs of the NSDI; learn more about chaordic organizations and the chaordic process; consider the relevance of the chaordic process to the NSDI; and form teams to explore options and next steps. Dee Hock and Tom Hurley of The Chaordic Alliance (TCA), together with Steve Hock and Bill Ulrich, TCA associates, explained the chaordic process and outlined three approaches to developing a chaordic organization. The 50+ meeting participants engaged TCA in a candid and productive discussion around these questions: Does NSDI need a governance structure? Is the chaordic approach most appropriate for this community? Does TCA understand the geodata community well enough to guide us in this process? Is the geodata community committed to this process? Meeting participants self-organized into five teams (Communications and Outreach, Drafting Team Formation, Finance, Leadership and Staffing, and Stewardship) to do the work needed to determine if it would be feasible to raise funds, assemble a drafting team and launch a two-year chaordic organizational development effort.

Summary of Meetings

Stewardship Team Washington, DC November 16-17, 1999

The Stewardship Team, charged with coordinating activities following the October meeting, met to review progress and consider next steps. The team accepted John Moeller's offer to provide \$500,000 from the Federal Geographic Data Committee to fund activities needed to get the initiative started; reached consensus to form a new, neutral nonprofit organization (probably a 501c3) to serve as the organizational home for the initiative; asked Kathy Covert to serve as interim Executive Director; and formed a negotiation team to meet with TCA to reach agreement on the terms of the relationship between TCA and the geodata community for the proposed two-year organization development effort.

Stewardship Negotiation Team Olympia, Washington December 2, 1999

Bruce Cahan, Kathy Covert, John Moeller, Terry Keating and Gene Thorley (the Olympia 5) met with Dee Hock and Tom Hurley of The Chaordic Alliance and reached agreement on the broad outlines for an agreement with TCA. Following the meeting, Bruce Cahan drafted a Memorandum of Understanding that was reviewed and revised in consultation with other members of the negotiation team. TCA and the negotiation team then worked in good faith for approximately one month to develop a mutually agreeable document, with TCA submitting a simplified version of the MOU for consideration just prior to the second Stewardship Team meeting.

Stewardship Team Denver, Colorado January 28, 2000

The second meeting of the Stewardship Team took place on January 28 after being re-scheduled due to a snowstorm on the East coast. As a consequence, not all members of the Stewardship Team were able to attend. Key decisions reached in the November meeting were challenged: Why form a 501c3? Does the NSDI need a governance structure? Is the chaordic process appropriate? The working groups raised additional issues to be resolved: Should the drafting team members be compensated for their work? Is it reasonable to expect a team of busy professionals to commit to a two-year process? The team members debated the compensation issue at some length and reached a compromise and decided to issue the call for drafting team as soon as possible. TCA offered to provide the funds necessary to form a 501c3 with the understanding that they would be repaid only if additional funds for the effort were raised from non-government sources.

Summary of Meetings

Stewardship Team Conference Call February 1, 2000

Following the second Stewardship Team meeting, TCA realized that the conditions necessary for a two-year effort to succeed were lacking and withdrew from active negotiation and involvement in that undertaking. TCA sent a letter to John Moeller and Kathy Covert indicating their concerns and decision to withdraw. John Moeller similarly expressed his mounting concern over the ability of the community to sustain a two-year process and stated his continued support for TCA.

FGDC – TCA Conference Call February 8, 2000

John Moeller, Kathy Covert and TCA defined a streamlined process, based on one of the design options presented at the October meeting, which would aim to have the geodata community complete a constitution by October 15, 2000. An overview of that process was provided on the FGDC website in the document entitled “Designing a Chaordic Organization for the Geospatial Data Community: Summary of the Process.” Work was begun immediately to launch the effort before the end of February.

First Working Group Meeting Olympia, Washington February 28-March 1, 2000

The GeoData Alliance Working Group, doing preliminary work on behalf of the Drafting Team, met with Dee Hock, Steve Hock and Tom Hurley of TCA and Ken O’Brien of R.W. Beck. The team crafted an initial purpose statement, twelve principles and an initial cut at classes of participation. They also discussed fundraising strategies and outlined an approach to potential private sector participants. This work is presented in the GeoData Alliance Organizational Initiative Workbook.